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E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
MONDAY, JUNE 2, 2008

In Today's Papers

AKP-CHP 'Wiretapping' Dispute Continues

All news outlets continued coverage of main opposition CHP's claims that the ruling AKP bugged CHP Headquarters and gave the recordings to the Islamist daily Vakit, which published, almost verbatim, a conversation between the party Secretary General Onder Sav and a former governor. Vakit said their correspondent called Sav on May 23rd, and Sav mistakenly hit the button to accept the call and failed to hang up. Meanwhile, Sav was meeting with a former governor to discuss CHP political strategy. On Friday, official records obtained from the 'Telecommunications Board' supported the Vakit correspondent's account that Sav's cell phone had indeed been connected to a telephone at Vakit's offices for more than 40 minutes. Prime Minister Erdogan said Friday evening the new information illustrated the "CHP's intention to destroy the positive atmosphere in the country." Erdogan said the AKP would make sure that the CHP answers for its baseless accusations at court. Erdogan stressed the CHP should apologize for "trying to change the agenda" by casting shadows over a new plan launched last week by the government for enhancing the development of southeast Turkey. Last week, the CHP charged that the AKP was "forming gangs within the police force to create its own deep state." Both the CHP and the AKP have taken the case to court, with the AKP asking for CHP to pay 50,000 Yeni Turkish Lira (YTL) in damages.

Islamist-oriented dailies Yeni Safak and Zaman wrote Sunday the documents obtained from Telecommunications Board showed how "ridiculous" CHP's allegations were. Several columnists in Islamist and mainstream papers called on Sav to resign. Sunday papers reported CHP as saying the document provided by Telecommunications Board was "not reliable," and that they were waiting for documents from the GSM operator 'Turkcell.' Monday's mainstream Milliyet says the CHP should not have hurried to blame the government when the transcripts of the meeting between Sav and a former governor appeared in Vakit daily. Media outlets close to the government will now manipulate the scandal to silence free press in Turkey, Milliyet says.

Meanwhile, Sunday's mainstream Vatan reports a court in Ankara on

April 25, 2007 authorized the police, the intelligence service (MIT), and the gendarme to monitor all telephone, SMS, e-mail and Internet communications in Turkey. Sunday's mainstream Milliyet says the police were authorized only to monitor communications in Turkey without tapping the conversations, with an aim to facilitate the fight against terror. In "Police, MIT and the Gendarme Monitor All Communications in Turkey, Including Phone, SMS, E-mail and Fax," leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet says Turkey has been "bugged from three separate channels." Mainstream Sabah writes in Turkey, some "50,000 phones are tapped by the police."

Erdogan Holds 'Consultative Meetings' with Party MPs

All papers report Prime Minister Erdogan told a "consultative meeting" of his ruling AKP cabinet ministers and lawmakers in Kizilcahamam resort near Ankara that the longer the closure case against the AKP continued, the more likely the Turkish economy will be affected negatively. "The closure case should end as soon as possible so that Turkey does not suffer economic problems," emphasized Erdogan, adding "Global investors will be reluctant to invest in an unstable Turkey." He also added "incompetent people" were fighting to preserve the 40-year old "unfair regime." Papers report lawmakers from the mainly Kurdish southeast urged the PM to implement the "Southeast Action Plan" at once and declare the southeast as "disaster region" in the face of the severe drought seen this year.

US Places the PKK on 'Narcotics Kingpin List'

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Taraf, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others reported Sunday the United States imposed further sanctions

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on the PKK to cut off its funding channels under an anti-drug smuggling law. Under the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act, the PKK will be denied access to the US financial system and all trade transactions involving US companies and individuals, papers cite a White House statement released Friday. "Now that the PKK has been designated under the kingpin act, the penalties for doing business with them are much higher," said Gordon Johndroe, a spokesman for the National Security Council (NSC). Four individuals, including Turkish national Cumhur Yakut, were also added to the list. Yakut, son-in-law of former parliamentarian Mustafa Bayram, has been sought by the Turkish police since 2000 under arrest warrants issued by courts in Diyarbakir, Istanbul and Van. Yakut's whereabouts are not known but media reports say he is hiding on the Arab Peninsula.

A Sunday column in mainstream Vatan on Sunday writes, "Over the past three or four years, Washington has exerted intensive pressure on the European countries to cut off the PKK's financial resources. With the latest implementation, it will not be surprising for the American Administration to step up anti-PKK pressures at the EU. This means that the PKK, which is largely financed in Europe, will face much more difficult days."

Peace Assembly Rally in Istanbul

Sabah, Milliyet, Vatan, Zaman, Cumhuriyet, Radikal: Papers report that around 20,000 people attended a rally in Istanbul to call for a democratic solution to the Kurdish problem. The rally was organized by Turkey Peace Assembly. Mainstream Milliyet reports that many DTP deputies, including Ahmet Turk, Hasip Kaplan, Sebahat Tuncel, Aysel Tugluk, Akin Birdal, also attended the rally. Security Forces stopped ROJ TV's live broadcasting through a rented vehicle from the rally area, Milliyet notes.

Ankara University Rowing Team Attacked in Sapanca

Weekend papers, today's Sabah, Milliyet, Radikal, Cumhuriyet and others: Weekend papers reported that during Turkey Rowing Championship in Sapanca town of Sakarya, the Ankara University Rowing Team was attacked and beaten by 25 people. Reportedly, the attackers cursed the team members for wearing shorts. Ankara University Water Sports training center head Prof. Yilmaz Akca said "I withdrew the full rowing team from the competition because of their injuries. We've been preparing for the championship for the last six months. This unfortunate incident prevented us from competing for the championship."

Metropoll Conducts Poll on AKP Closure Case

Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports that a poll conducted by Metropoll Company showed that closure of the AKP will not change people's political preferences and that 48.8% of those polled will continue supporting Tayip Erdogan even if the party was closed. The same poll showed that 65.9% of CHP supporters were against CHP leader Baykal's re-election.

Editorial Commentary on Iraq; US Elections

"Is There A Happy Ending For Iraq?"

Hakan Albayrak wrote in Islamist-leaning Yeni Safak (6/2): "In order to ensure a hopeful future for Iraq, the Baghdad administration must send all occupation forces out of Iraq immediately. If Shiites and Sunnis can unify on this matter, even the US will not be able to object. Given the recent stories from Iraq, we may be seeing this happen. The US is currently working to expand its military presence through a long-term strategic agreement with Iraq. Fortunately, Sunni resistance groups have joined Iraqi Shiites who oppose the presence of occupation troops. The prominent leaders of both groups clearly state they will not recognize any agreement which may violate Iraq's sovereignty. It seems very difficult for the Iraqi government to allow American bases in their country under such immense opposition. Prime Minister Maliki also confirms that Iraqi groups are getting closer and closer to each

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other every day. By looking at the overall developments, there are good reasons to be optimistic about Iraq's future and the withdrawal of all occupation forces."

"Obama-mania and Ankara"

Omer Taspinar wrote in mainstream Sabah (6/2): "American university youth are wrapped up in Obama-mania as they are excited about Barack Obama's promises of change. Obama-mania is also the reason for the American youth's interest in elections. Hillary Clinton, compared to Obama's campaign, is falling behind in the race. I think the real defeat will hit John McCain in the upcoming elections since he does not comprehend the social desire for change. The more Obama represents change, the more McCain represents the continuation of the current administration. Interestingly enough, the ruling AKP favors John McCain, most likely due to his Iraq policy. Just like McCain, Ankara does not want the US to withdraw from Iraq immediately. Ankara worries about a civil war between Shiites and Sunnis, along with the possibility of Iraqi Kurds fighting for independence. However Ankara has to realize that Obama also does not want an immediate withdrawal from Iraq. He repeatedly assures American people by saying 'we will not repeat the mistakes we made when we invaded Iraq when we withdraw from Iraq.' It will be very unfortunate if Ankara continues to favor McCain. Instead of focusing on Iraq, Ankara had better think about McCain's policy on attacking Iran."

TV News:

CNN Turk

Domestic News

- Transportation Minister Binali Yildirim announced June 12 as the new date to launch a new generation communication satellite, Turksat 3A, from French Guiana, which is located on the northeastern coast of South America. The launching of Turksat 3A was postponed on Friday due to a problem in its launching software.

- Foreign Minister Ali Babacan will visit the US from June 3-9 to meet Vice President Cheney, Secretary Rice and the secretaries of Treasury and Energy.

- President Abdullah Gul will pay an official visit to Japan from June 3-8. Gul's 'historic' visit to Japan will be Turkey's first presidential visit to Japan since 1924, when the two countries first established diplomatic relations.

International News

- Israel disclosed plans on Sunday to build around 900 new homes for Jews in the disputed east Jerusalem.
- Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert delayed a key cabinet decision on an Egypt-mediated truce with Hamas in and around the Gaza Strip.
- The death toll from China's earthquake on May 12 has increased to 70,000.

WILSON